

# Baucus tours Libby mill

Senator focuses on protecting Stimson jobs

Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.) toured the Stimson lumber mill in Libby on Friday, Aug. 9, followed by a meeting with mill workers, management and community officials to discuss how to work together to protect mill jobs.

Hundreds of workers are facing the prospect of losing their jobs because of the mill's concerns about adequate timber supply and asbestos-related workers compensation

claims that have been filed by mill workers who have nowhere else to turn.

The Stimson lumber mill is contaminated because some of the buildings were insulated with asbestos-contaminated vermiculite insulation manufactured by W.R. Grace & Co., which mined the vermiculite for decades near Libby.

"I'm touring Stimson to talk with workers about ways we can

work together to protect their jobs," Mr. Baucus said. "The mill is facing some hard times and I'll do everything I can to protect their 330 jobs and to create more jobs for folks in Libby. We'll sit down together to talk about solutions to the problems facing Stimson and the Northwest Montana timber community, including timber supply and asbestos-related health costs. This is about jobs — jobs at the Stimson mill, and jobs at our smaller mills all along the line."

Mr. Baucus has held a number of meetings with Stimson management so far this year and has worked with the U.S. Forest Service to discuss potential solutions for Stimson, including urging the Administration to issue new rules for categorical exclusions that would allow specific areas of downed timber to be harvested more quickly.

Mr. Baucus also met with several concerned Libby citizens in Washington last month to discuss the situation at Stimson. Baucus said that he was pleased to hear that Libby citizens are meeting regularly and working together to develop community-based solutions.

Earlier this month, Mr. Baucus also began investigating the creation of a fund to help pay for the long-term health costs associated with work-related asbestos illnesses. He is looking into creating a "white lung trust fund" for asbestos-illnesses modeled after the Black Lung Trust Fund, which provides monthly payments and medical treatment for workers who have become ill as a result of working in coal mines.

"Stimson mill is now facing the prospect of closing the Montana mill because of the number of workers who have become ill with asbestos-related diseases," Mr.



Sen. Max Baucus, left, greets Libby resident Jim Racicot at a hamburger picnic served by the Baucus campaign Aug. 9 in Libby. Baucus was in Libby to tour the Stimson mill and meet with area officials. See related story on this page.

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— Sen. Max Baucus

Baucus said. "I'm aggressively moving forward with the White Lung Trust Fund to provide as much relief as possible to individuals who are suffering from asbestos-related diseases. I think it's unfortunate that W.R. Grace continues to avoid its responsibilities to

the folks in Libby, which just makes it harder on everyone else in the community. That's why I'm trying to help by pursuing a White Lung Trust Fund," he said.

"I'm working together with Senator Burns, Representative Rehberg, Governor Martz and Stimson workers to find solutions. Protecting jobs and creating jobs is my top priority and I'm looking forward to putting our heads together tomorrow and doing what's right for Libby, for Stimson, and for Montana," Mr. Baucus said.



Gary Hunsberger, left, of Libby visits with Tony Brown of Troy at Sen. Max Baucus' hamburger picnic in Libby. See related story on this page. Hunsberger is a Democrat running for the office of Lincoln